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ABSTRACT

Good methods for assessing the comparative costs of various types of academic programs are badly needed. This report briefly describes a method for doing this used in 1970 at the University of South Florida. The method described has limitations, since the data are based on non-personnel costs only. A more useful analysis would be based on total costs. But the method can be applied in comparisons of either total costs or any specific type of cost, such as instructional personnel, support personnel, equipment, etc. It is felt that requiring departments and schools to develop data of this type would facilitate both short- and long-range planning. (Author/HS)

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Comparative Departmental Costs

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Good methods for assessing the comparative costs of various types of academic programs are badly needed. The present report briefly describes a method for doing this that was used in 1970 at the University of South Florida*. As will be indicated, the method described has limitations since the data are based on non-personnel costs only. A more useful analysis would be based on total costs. But the method is the most important thing. It can be applied in comparisons of either total costs, or any specific type of cost such as instructional personnel, support personnel, equipment, etc. The specific data presented in the table are for illustration only; it should not be assumed that they are in any way comparable to Hofstra data. The question being raised is whether requiring departments and schools to develop data of this type would facilitate both short and long range planning.

Although the study being cited contains much data, only two sets of figures are presented here. The first set of data indicates the cost per full-time student equivalent (FTE) for each department and school within the university, for the two academic years 1967-68 and 1968-69. The number of FTE students is obtained by dividing the total number of student semester hours generated in a department in a given year by the average number of credits taken by students in a year. The total cost is the sum of all budgeted expenditures in each unit. It does not include overhead. The total cost per FTE student is obtained by dividing the total cost by the total number of FTE students. These data are presented in the first two columns of the table. In the last two columns of the table, the data for each unit are presented as an index number indicating the ratio of the total cost per FTE student within each unit to the average cost for all units within the university. In these columns a value of 2.00 indicates that the cost is double the university average, whereas a value of .60 indicates that the cost is only 60% of the university average.

The figures as given do not include salaries of either faculty or staff members. If these figures were included, the data would be much more meaningful.

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*University of South Florida. A study of expenditures for expense categories by the colleges. Institutional Research Report No. 56. Office of Academic Services.

While the numbers in the table have limited meaning per se, comparisons indicate the kind of analysis that would be useful. Thus, one can compare the costs of running different schools and departments. In the data presented, the most expensive school (Engineering) costs three to four times as much as the least expensive school (Business). The most expensive departments in the sciences cost more than ten times as much as most non-science departments. One can also compare year to year changes in the costs of running a given unit. In a given year, the costs will probably be up for some units, and down for others. These changes should be carefully analyzed to see whether they are justified.

It is suggested that these types of data should be collected for each department and school within the university. The data should refer to total costs, rather than only non-personnel costs. Both comparative and longitudinal analyses could then be performed in order to facilitate rational budget decisions that would lead to the implementation of predetermined specific goals.

	Total Per FTE Student 1967-68	Total Per FTE Student 1968-69	Ratio of Total Cost Per FTE Student to Avg. for all Depts. 1967-68	Ratio of Total Cost Per FTE Student to Avg. for all Depts. 1968-69
Basic Studies	$19.55	$19.91	.54	.55
Humanities	16.58	16.05	.45	.44
Functional English	16.86	18.36	.46	.50
Behavioral Science	12.07	16.58	.33	.45
Biological Science	17.79	15.03	.49	.41
Physical Science	57.72	60.22	1.58	1.65
Functional Mathematics	10.78	9.75	.29	.27
Functional Foreign Language	24.58	25.16	.67	.69
American Idea	12.71	10.20	.35	.28
Division Natural Science	66.50	69.76	1.82	1.91
Chemistry	101.01	109.51	2.76	2.98
Physics	44.70	42.31	1.22	1.16
Botany and Bacteriology	49.18	52.69	1.35	1.44
Zoology	208.00	182.17	5.70	5.00
Mathematics	9.85	10.16	.27	.28
Geology	68.50	63.53	1.88	1.74
Astronomy	45.97	31.00	1.26	.85
Division Fine Arts	82.01	87.73	2.24	2.41
Music	61.85	81.35	1.69	2.23
Theater	63.22	40.33	1.73	1.11
Visual Arts	68.89	73.79	1.87	2.02
Dance	--	6.30	--	.17
Division Language & Literature	17.38	17.61	.48	.48
Small Departments	--	7.83	--	.21
English	9.65	10.08	.26	.28
Foreign Languages	12.32	16.90	.34	.46
Speech	13.26	15.26	.36	.42
Division Social Science	17.25	19.00	.47	.52
Anthropology	16.64	17.08	.46	.47
Geography	16.78	24.42	.46	.67
History	15.05	16.55	.41	.45
Psychology	24.58	26.76	.67	.73
Political Science	10.18	11.72	.28	.32
Interdiscip. Social Science	3.52	4.85	.09	.13
Sociology	11.04	11.09	.30	.30
Physical Education	129.87	129.64	3.56	3.56
Liberal Arts (Total)	39.16	41.04	1.07	1.12
Business Administration	23.67	22.09	.65	.61
Education	42.29	42.56	1.16	1.17
Engineering	96.00	68.88	2.63	1.89
All departments combined	36.52	36.45	1.00	1.00